Government Services

ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

This Business Plan for the three years commencing April 1, 2000 was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Government Accountability Act* and the government's accounting policies. All of the government's policy decisions as at February 1, 2000 with material economic or fiscal implications of which I am aware have been considered in preparing the Business Plan.

The Ministry's priorities outlined in the Business Plan were developed in the context of the government's business and fiscal plans. I am committed to achieving the planned results laid out in this Business Plan.

Patricia L. Nelson, *Minister of Government Services*
February 1, 2000

INTRODUCTION

Alberta Government Services (AGS) is a new Ministry, established in May 1999 to better meet Albertans' growing expectations for more flexible and convenient access to government. The Ministry will focus on the development of a "gateway" to government that will affect every Albertan. This "gateway" represents a fundamental change in how government interacts with the public and private sector; a common, secure portal will allow individuals and businesses to interact with government. Key business and consumer competencies and activities have been merged into the Ministry to form the nucleus for the "gateway" initiative.

In addition to initiating a "gateway", the Ministry's current activities touch the lives of every Albertan through leading-edge programs for land titles, motor vehicles, corporate/personal property registration, vital event registrations and consumer services. AGS' strong emphasis on customer service is an integral part to the success of the Ministry.

Alberta Government Services is also responsible for the Regulatory Review Secretariat. The mandate of the Regulatory Review Secretariat is established by Executive Council and reflects the government wide initiative to reduce, simplify or eliminate regulations.

During its first three-year planning period, AGS will build on its achievements in implementing award-winning, innovative service delivery and regulatory initiatives with a focus on:

- ensuring an informed, fair and competitive marketplace; and
- increasing the quality, accessibility and efficiency of registration, licensing and information services.

The Ministry will also actively explore partnering opportunities with other government departments and levels of government, building on our core businesses to establish a comprehensive access point – or "gateway" – to a wide array of government programs and services.

MINISTRY CHALLENGES

The Ministry's business plan has been prepared within the context of a number of evolving service demands and technological issues and opportunities. These include the following:

- the need for all government departments to embrace service excellence supported by a "gateway" access to a broad range of information, products and services for Albertans;
- the increasing demands on registration, licensing, and information products and services, driven by the on-going economic growth of the province and continued pressures to accommodate the increasing service desires of Albertans;
- the accelerated development of new Internet, call-centre, database, and computer technologies that can improve service delivery and increase efficiencies but which pose challenges in terms of regulation, enforcement, cross-jurisdictional consultation, and consumer and privacy protection;
- the increasing opportunities for establishing partnerships with the private sector to improve service delivery and voluntary or self-regulation, raise marketplace standards, and increase consumer awareness;

- rising public expectations regarding service quality, convenience and accessibility, including self-service options with respect to some registry functions;
- ongoing consumer issues, for example in the areas of home renovations and landlord/tenant relationships, and new issues arising from deregulation, the growth of electronic commerce, and an increasingly complex and diverse marketplace;
- the demands induced by marketplace globalization to share information and work cooperatively with other provinces and jurisdictions in both the consumer protection and registries areas; and
- the need to respect both the right to access government records and the protection of privacy in the execution of the Ministry's activities.

The challenges implied in these market and technological changes are reflected in the Ministry's business plan.

VISION

Connecting Albertans – A new gateway to government.

MISSION

Service excellence is the focus for delivery of services to Albertans. Alberta Government Services partners with governments, stakeholders, and businesses to:

- provide a secure, high-quality, and innovative gateway to a wide range of government services, including consumer information, registration, licensing, and other government services;
- facilitate, support, and, where mandated by legislation, regulate and strictly enforce high standards of consumer protection and business practice; and
- support the Regulatory Review Secretariat in its mandate to reduce regulatory red tape and complexity throughout government.

CLIENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The Ministry's primary clients include individual consumers and businesses in Alberta. However, AGS also works closely with other departments, levels of government, law enforcement agencies, and business and non-profit organizations in exploring ways to improve service delivery, increase fairness and safety in the marketplace, and improve the province's regulatory framework.

CORE BUSINESSES

Both of the Ministry's core businesses support the key businesses of the Alberta government; **People** and **Prosperity**:

- Services to consumers, which include various registration and licensing services and an array of information services relating to consumer, corporate, and government matters.

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In addition to enhancing and expanding existing services, the Ministry will develop innovative new programs in collaboration with other departments and levels of government toward the development of a new gateway to government services. Service excellence will continue to be the focus of delivery of services to Albertans.

- Regulatory, monitoring, and compliance functions, which ensure that an appropriate legislative and regulatory framework supports the Alberta marketplace, and that the mechanisms are in place to ensure effective regulatory compliance and enforcement.

The schematic below provides a visual picture of the structure and inter-relationships of the Ministry's activities.

The key focus of this business plan is on service excellence. This area holds significant challenges and opportunities to provide better, more streamlined, and more unified services to Albertans. The Ministry's governance and program development roles will remain important ongoing activities throughout the business plan period.

MAJOR GOALS

The Ministry's major goals include:

- A common portal ("gateway") so Albertans receive the services they deserve;
- Excellence in service development, delivery and accessibility;
- A fair and effective marketplace in Alberta with a high standard of business conduct; and
- A streamlined, effective, and relevant regulatory environment.

BUSINESS PLAN GOALS, KEY RESULTS, AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 1: A COMMON PORTAL ("GATEWAY") SO ALBERTANS RECEIVE THE SERVICES THEY DESERVE

KEY RESULTS	STRATEGIES
• Seamless service delivery across government	• In conjunction with Innovation and Science, complete evaluation of "gateway" alternatives and strategies including "best practices" in approaches elsewhere, prepare implementation plan, and proceed with development of enhanced services program. • Continue to streamline and simplify access to government information through the "one-window access to services" project, jointly with Innovation and Science. • Work with the Personnel Administration Office and Public Affairs Bureau to identify and promote best practices and standards of service excellence across government. • Explore the development of public and private sector partnerships to create opportunities for shared costs and resources, and incorporation of leading-edge private sector knowledge and technology in existing and proposed systems. Redevelopment may include the Alberta Land Titles, Motor Vehicle Registration and Personal Property Registration systems. • Explore partnerships with other government bodies that provide registration/licencing/information services to improve user access and convenience. • Develop cross-government information technology initiatives in partnership with Innovation and Science and other departments. • Enhance Ministry's call centre functions that promote a single access to an array of governmental services and information; assess opportunities to apply the Internet more widely for improved customer service, information availability, and delivery efficiency; evaluate the Consumer Information Center and respond to customers' expectations for increased self-service.

GOAL 2: EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE DEVELOPMENT, DELIVERY AND ACCESSIBILITY

KEY RESULTS	STRATEGIES
• Service accessibility, security, convenience and quality for clients	• Enhance the marketplace surveillance/monitoring capabilities to assist AGS to anticipate and respond to changing marketplace requirements. • Continue effective management and delivery of the Ministry's wide range of services. Registry services accounts for more than 12 million transactions annually. • Adapt and implement new information access standards for all services provided by AGS so that they reflect fair business practices. • Implement the Ministry's comprehensive accountability framework, which includes performance standards and customer satisfaction assessments, to enhance the integrity of the service delivery processes. • Consult with the survey community and other key stakeholders to identify improvements for the digital plan registration process that was implemented in 1999. • Plan and reinvest to restructure and upgrade the Ministry's information technology and telecommunications systems over the next five years. • Implement best practices and standards of service excellence through all of the Ministry's programs and services.
• Improved marketplace awareness with consumers better able to help themselves	• Provide timely, effective and accessible information to the public and business regarding legislation. • Increase partnering with other government agencies (in and outside of Alberta), consumer groups and business associations to improve the marketplace awareness of consumers. • Publish a regular enforcement bulletin to raise community awareness of consumer protection legislation, promote good business practices and highlight the enforcement role of the Ministry. • Increase opportunities for Albertans to access information about consumer legislation and current consumer issues in order to enhance consumer awareness and self-reliance. Use advanced technologies such as fax back, the Internet and an automated telephone information system to provide accurate, relevant information to Alberta consumers and businesses about legislation and current marketplace issues on a seven-days-a-week, 24-hours-a-day basis.

GOAL 3: A FAIR AND EFFECTIVE MARKETPLACE IN ALBERTA WITH A HIGH STANDARD OF BUSINESS CONDUCT

KEY RESULTS	STRATEGIES

• A regulatory framework is in place that supports a fair marketplace	• Monitor/fine-tune new *Fair Trading Act*, raise awareness of the Act, and continue related legislative enforcement activities. Ensure that the legal community recognizes the ability to prosecute unfair business practices.
	
	• Consult with the business and legal communities to identify changes to legislation such as the development of new types of business entities that would enhance Alberta's position in the marketplace.
	
	• Explore additional regulatory changes to harmonize legislation and regulations with other jurisdictions under the Agreement on Internal Trade. Examples include:
	  • Collection practices
	  • Electronic commerce
	
	• Provide support to the Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council as it assumes responsibility for industry regulation including licensing enforcement and education standards.
	
	• Continue to work and consult with key stakeholders to review and amend current legislation
	  • *Co-operative Associations Act*
	  • *Charitable Fund-Raising Act* and Regulations
	  • *Residential Tenancies Act* and Regulations

• Fair market practices through compliance with regulation that supports consumer confidence	• Dedicate investigative resources to major marketplace issues and where warranted take effective enforcement action. • Work with the legal community to identify changes to legislation that would support fair marketplace practices. • Continue to improve monitoring and enforcement efforts through reciprocal agreements with other federal/provincial/territorial jurisdictions to enable enforcement across the country. • Develop and implement an investigation priority policy to ensure that resources are focused on the most serious violations (residential tenancies, trade practices, time shares, loan brokers, collection practices, etc.) and that there is a consistent investigation strategy across the province. • Consult with other provincial ministries and municipalities to develop a framework for reviewing and assessing Order-in-Council exemption requests from foreign companies for Intensive Livestock Operations and Agri-Forestry Operations. • Continue the ongoing implementation of the national information sharing database to support investigation/enforcement activities. This will be done through the CANSHARE sub-committee, which Alberta co-chairs.

GOAL 4: A STREAMLINED, EFFECTIVE, AND RELEVANT REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

KEY RESULTS	STRATEGIES

• Simplification of regulations, legislation, and associated administrative and operational processes and the elimination of unnecessary regulations	• Review on an ongoing basis the acts and regulations administered by AGS and recommend changes for reduced regulatory cost, duplication, and complexity.
	
	• The Regulatory Review Secretariat will:
	  • Continue to work with all government departments in regards to the government wide initiative to reduce, simplify or eliminate regulations;
	  • Assess the government's progress in achieving the goals and objectives that were established in 1996; and
	  • Develop recommendations for the role, if any, of the Secretariat beyond fiscal year 2000/01.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Staff from five specialized areas including Finance and Administration, Human Resource Services, Communications, Corporate Services, and Legal Services provide support to the operating divisions in achieving their business plan goals and strategies. Human Resource Services and Information Systems support the business plan through key initiatives and strategies that affect the entire Ministry.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

One of the priorities over the course of this three-year business plan is to maximize the flexibility of the Ministry's human resources by ensuring the knowledge, skills and abilities are in place to accomplish current and future business plan goals. Continuous learning and staff development are encouraged. This is even more important today to meet the day-to-day challenges of a growing economy that has placed demands on staff.

A Corporate Human Resource Strategy is being implemented across government in response to the Growth Summit recommendations. It is intended to address issues such as the overall aging of the public service, stiff competition for scarce resources and rapidly changing skill needs. As part of our Human Resource Plan, the Ministry has undertaken initiatives to achieve the strategic intent of this government-wide strategy. This includes initiatives in the areas of corporate learning, leadership development, recruitment, and continuity planning.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

AGS' Information Technology priorities are designed to ensure that technology supports the business, that communication and information management are as technologically efficient as possible, that departmental operating systems and technology infrastructure support business requirements, and remain stable and secure, and that staff are fully trained to make maximum use of the computer tools available to them.

GOAL	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	SOURCE	HISTORICAL	TARGET
Goal 1: A common portal ("gateway") so Albertans receive the services they deserve	Customer satisfaction (used in support of Goal 1 and Goal 2). Three separate groups of Registry customers are surveyed: 1. Quarterly telephone surveys of customers who have visited a Registry Agent within the last year. 2. Quarterly self completion surveys (by fax) to organizations that receive services directly from government. 3. Semi-annual self completion surveys (by fax) to organizations that have on-line access.	Canadian Facts	This is the base information year. However, previous surveys have indicated a high level of satisfaction.	85%
	Customer satisfaction (used in support of Goal 1 and Goal 2). Consumers who have contacted the Ministry for advice and information, with specific respect to: 1. average waiting time for service, 2. ease of locating Ministry for information, 3. usefulness of information provided.	Mail-out questionnaire. Waiting time for service will be measured through reports obtained from Internal Call System. Also a sampling of Consumers who have contacted the Ministry will be surveyed on a yearly basis.	This is the base information year.	This is a base year which will set a measure to benchmark the testing of future performance.
Goal 2: Excellence in service development, delivery and accessibility	Using the Registry services measure from Goal 1.	Canadian Facts	This is the base information year.	85%
	Using the consumer feedback measure from Goal 1.	Mail-out questionnaire	This is the base information year.	This is a base year which will set a measure to benchmark the testing of future performance.
Goal 3: A fair and effective marketplace in Alberta with a high standard of business conduct	Percentage of consumer investigations which are successful.	Information provided from the Consumer Affairs Tracking System.	1998/99 – 94.8%	95%
Goal 4: A streamlined, effective, and relevant regulatory environment	Regulatory Review Secretariat: Consider establishing new measures. While "status reports" and "three year achievement" statistics have been reported in prior years, these are not particularly useful in measuring meaningful or substantive progress in any given department.	Status reports and three year achievement statistics for ministries.	1996 to 1999 Total Regulations: 1239 Re – enacted: 292 Repealed: 259 Exempt: 72 To be reviewed: 616	Extended to December 31, 2000 for review of all regulations (further rescheduling required).

Ministry Income Statement

(thousands of dollars)

	Comparable 1998-99 Actual	Comparable 1999-2000 Budget	Comparable 1999-2000 Forecast	2000-01 Estimates	2001-02 Target	2002-03 Target
REVENUE						
Premiums, Fees and Licences	290,728	283,491	295,917	236,333	240,661	240,332
Other Revenue	159	50	116	48	48	48
MINISTRY REVENUE	290,887	283,541	296,033	236,381	240,709	240,380
EXPENSE						
Program						
Ministry Support Services	5,598	6,110	6,297	6,271	6,497	6,557
Regulatory and Strategic Services	14,935	10,607	10,278	11,127	11,391	11,505
Registries and Services to Consumers	30,109	29,155	29,658	30,175	30,883	31,192
Statutory Programs and Valuation Adjustments	499	400	110	400	400	400
MINISTRY EXPENSE	51,141	46,272	46,343	47,973	49,171	49,654
Gain (Loss) on Disposal of Capital Assets	(10)	-	-	-	-	-
NET OPERATING RESULT	239,736	237,269	249,690	188,408	191,538	190,726

Consolidated Net Operating Result

(thousands of dollars)

	Comparable 1998-99 Actual	Comparable 1999-2000 Budget	Comparable 1999-2000 Forecast	2000-01 Estimates	2001-02 Target	2002-03 Target
Ministry Revenue	290,887	283,541	296,033	236,381	240,709	240,380
Inter-ministry consolidation adjustments	-	-	-	-	-	-
Consolidated Revenue	290,887	283,541	296,033	236,381	240,709	240,380
Ministry Program Expense	51,141	46,272	46,343	47,973	49,171	49,654
Inter-ministry consolidation adjustments	-	-	-	-	-	-
Consolidated Program Expense	**51,141**	**46,272**	**46,343**	**47,973**	**49,171**	**49,654**
Gain (Loss) on Disposal of Capital Assets	(10)	-	-	-	-	-
CONSOLIDATED NET OPERATING RESULT	239,736	237,269	249,690	188,408	191,538	190,726